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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC-01477-88  
21 April 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Marten van Heuven  
National Intelligence Officer for Europe

SUBJECT: Special Warning and Forecast Report:  
Conventional Arms Control in Europe

1. Once the INF agreement is ratified and the Moscow summit concluded, the spotlight will be on conventional force reductions in Europe. Yet even under the best of circumstances, agreement on conventional arms control is unlikely in the foreseeable future. The gap between public expectations and the real prospects for agreement will create major problems for the United States and its West European allies. Sentiment in the Senate to link approval of a possible US-Soviet START (strategic arms reduction) agreement to conventional reductions would magnify the pressure.

2. The most optimistic scenario would have new Conventional Stability Talks (CST) beginning in late summer or early fall, with the long-stalled Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) talks disbanding then or soon thereafter. Even this early timetable -- which itself depends on the prior conclusion of the Vienna CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) talks with adequate human rights provisions -- will leave East and West a long way from agreement. With a broader mandate and many more players than MBFR, the new conventional talks will face even more daunting substantive and procedural obstacles.

3. The West has made little progress toward a common position. The French have strong and different views of their own -- not so much over substantive positions (which are not so far from ours) as over their insistence on a multinational, CSCE-like forum assuring French independence from a joint NATO posture. These differences are now being aired in a confidential "Quint" of NATO's High Level Task Force (consisting of the US, the UK, France, West Germany, and Italy). Even assuming eventual agreement in the Quint, there are contentious issues affecting other NATO members: Turkey, for example, wants assurances that the eventual zone of reductions takes into account contiguous Soviet territory.

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4. The East, by contrast, almost certainly has a position ready to be tabled as soon as the new talks begin, if not before. And the Warsaw Pact's numerical superiority in tanks, artillery, and other major items gives it most of the bargaining chips, which it can play with little cost to its military capabilities. Even highly asymmetrical reductions -- on the order of 3:1 or even 4:1 in some categories -- would weaken NATO without significantly diminishing Warsaw Pact strength. But the prospect of such an agreement would stimulate strong public pressure on NATO governments to respond -- particularly if progress on nuclear reductions was seen to be held up by a deadlock on conventional forces. A unilateral Soviet reduction would have a similar effect.

- In the absence of an agreed NATO position, the West may well be presented with a superficially attractive Warsaw Pact offer that it must reject in the face of considerable public opposition. Such a scenario would further complicate the maintenance of a NATO security consensus.

5. To date, conventional arms control has been accorded low priority by Western governments preoccupied with nuclear arms negotiations and other issues, with the result that NATO is ill-prepared for the coming CST round. The moment of truth may come with a new Soviet/Warsaw Pact initiative some time in the fall, when our ability to exert a leadership role will be hindered by the presidential election campaign.

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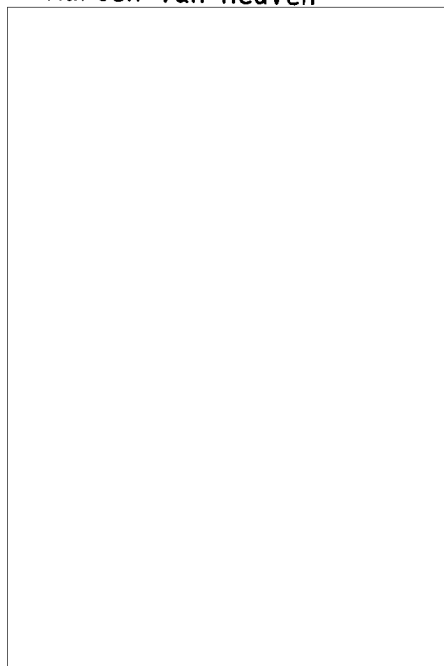
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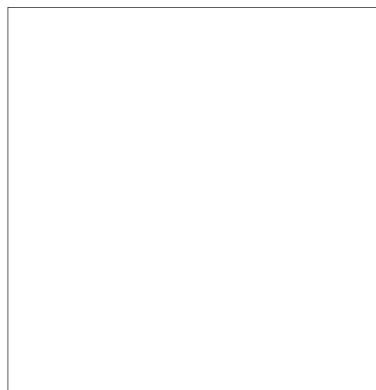
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